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A LOVER'S BREAST-KNOT



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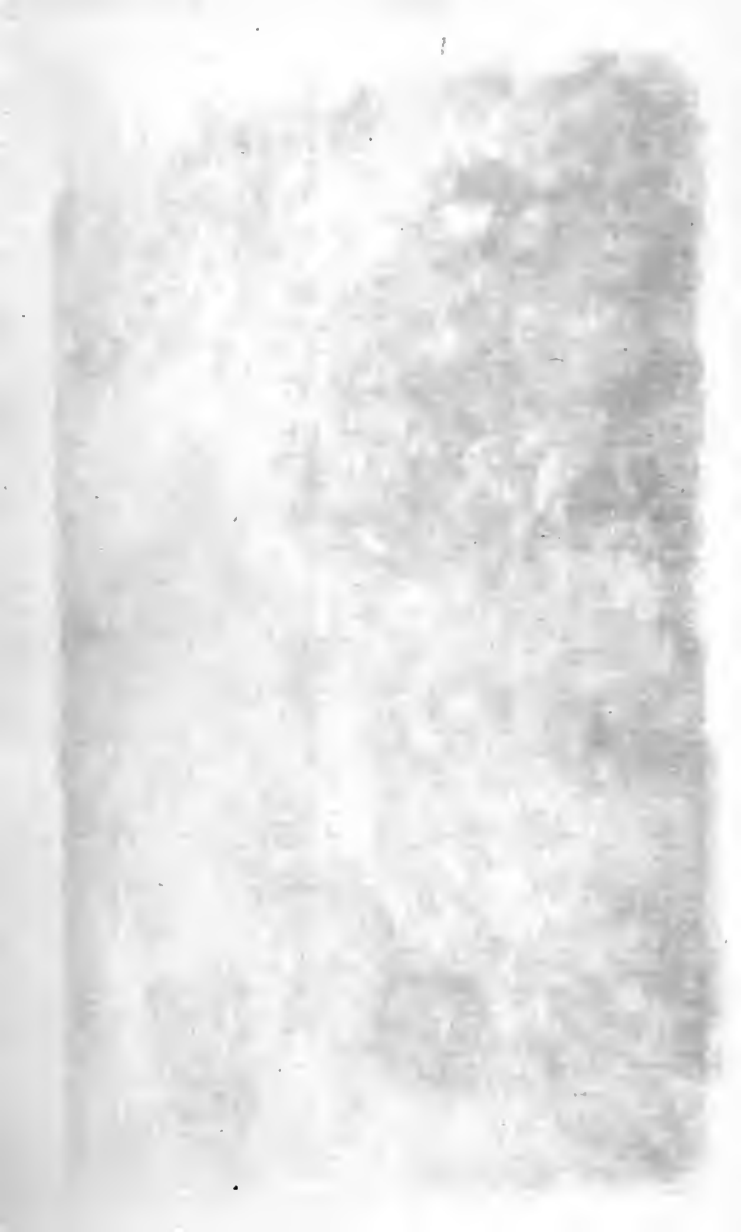
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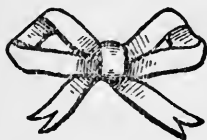


A Lover's Breast-Knot



A LOVER'S BREAST-KNOT

BY
KATHARINE TYNAN
(*Mrs Hinkson*)



LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS
1896

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Of this Edition 500 copies have been printed

TO HARRY

HEARTSEASE



*Heartsease you gave me, richer, rarer
Than any heartsease blowing, growing.
Not Death shall make me less the wearer
Of the dear heartsease of your sowing.*

*Heartsease you gave me for a token
You took my share of pain and grieving.
A charmed heart to bear unbroken
Amid Love's sorrow, Love's bereaving.*

*Heartsease for yesterday, to-morrow,
And for the dying year and vernal:
To make me flowers the winter thorough,
For mortal Time and Time eternal.*

*Take for your heartsease purple, golden.
Heartsease that bloomed in Love's gold weather,
For all in which I am beholden,
My heartsease and my heart together!*

Love's Trouble

FOR you I fear the stabbing rain,
The wounding wind ;
O wandering love, return again,
Turn and be kind.
The distant thunder in the hills
I fear for you ;
I fear the lightning's spear that kills,
Wavering, blue.

For you the noonday sun I dread.
O noonday sun,
Rest quietly on his dear head,
My dearest one !
For you all evil beasts I fear,
All foul affrights
With wingèd shadows that creep anear
In lonely nights.

Dear angels, guard him where he goes,
In day and dark ;
Lest nigh his path, in lily and rose,
The serpent lurk.

O, sleepless eyes of blessed ones,
 Watch o'er my love ;
And wings that shame th' eternal suns
 Winnow above !

Greater Love

THERE is but one sweet Love, one Love
unroving,
Truer than mine may be ;
One constant Love beyond all mortal loving,
Greater than yours for me.

Therefore unto that Love I do commend you,
So that when mine shall fail
That Love unfailing may wrap round, befriend you,
That sea of Love prevail.

So that when my poor love is but remembered
As some sweet thing foregone,
That Love may fill you full with sweets unnumbered,
And leave you not alone.

O Love eternal, Love supernal, keep him
If haply I should go ;
In all Love's raptures, Love's rewardings steep him,
Yea, pay him all I owe !

Love's Bird

WHEN thrushes rest the weary head,
And linnets lie in gold and green,
When blackbirds on a downy bed
Are silvered with a moony sheen,

What voice awakes the emerald house?
What love incarnate flies on wings?
What passion shakes the trembling boughs?
It is the Bird of Love that sings.

It is the Bird of Love that sings,
Stabbing our silence like a sword,
And Love himself that flies on wings.
God and enchanter and no bird.

Our moon of honey, our marriage moon
Rides in the heaven for our delight.
The silver world grows golden soon,
Honey and gold spilled in the night.

The Bird of Love, the Bird of pain,
He sings our marriage moon away;
Filling the night with golden rain,
Betwixt the darkness and the day.

Closer and closer, hold me close,
For is it Love or Death he sings?
And is it Love or Death that goes
Through the sweet night with rustling wings?

Love's Flight

THERE is a love of earth, Love,
A love that flies on wings;
The one hath lowliest birth, Love,
The other blood of kings.

O look, look, my Sweetheart,
Where yon skylark flies;
So light and bright, my Sweetheart,
In the clear skies!

He is our love on wings, Love,
That flies in sure bliss
Beyond the wreck of things, Love,
On earth where death is.

And yet not all of heaven:
He flies back to earth
To find his heaven at even
Beside his own hearth.

O look, look, my own Love,
'Tis our love on wings!
But, ah, the wingless love, Love,
'Mid earth's creeping things.

Love's Watchfulness

WHEN you awake I wake,
And when you sleep I sleep.
Your lightest sigh will break
My sweetest dreams and deep.

My heart watches aware
Whether I wake or sleep.
Though far in dreams I fare,
Call, and my heart will leap.

The grave is not so low,
The way to Heaven so steep,
But I should surely know
If my Love stirred in sleep.

What world, what starry sphere
My heart in dreams could keep,
If you wanted me, dear,
If you should wake and weep?

Love's Garden

A LITTLE garden, great enough
To hold Love's wings.
Yea, and the sacred Bird of Love,
Hark, how he sings !

The ardent Flower of Love, likewise,
Burns in the brake.
Love's wings are set with myriad eyes,
Ever awake.

Heavy with honey flies the bee
From rose to rose ;
Powdered with gold dust to the knee,
He comes and goes.

The secret song the nightingale
Sang to the moon,
It shall be hidden by Love's veil,
Now it is noon.

The secret thing the golden bee
Said to the rose,
Though it be known to thee and me,
Shall we disclose ?

Ah no ! Love's secrets let us keep,
Lest the winged god
Angered, go seeking, while we sleep,
Some new abode.

Love Inconstant

AFTER April month and May
Love of birds will fly away.
After June light loves grown chilly
Part, though tarry rose and lily.
O alas! such loves should sunder,
They who made the world a wonder,
Raining from their honey throats
Golden notes and silver notes!

O in April what unrest
Stirs the swallow's sea-born breast
For some love of old and golden,
Where pale orchards bloom unfolden!
For some silent heartstring stirred,
Some lost heaven remembered.
And the old dream calls him home,
Home by trackless skies and foam.

O alas, such things should be!
Cold as stone are he and she:
Empty gapes the nest and wide
They two planned with such sweet pride.

The sweet nestlings flown as far
As the light-winged lost loves are.
Love, whose love endures, see then
How sweet Love is wronged again !

How these birds, from lark to sparrow,
Snap his bow and blunt his arrow !

Love in Absence

I

LOVE IMPATIENT

COME while the sweet Spring stays, O come !
Come ere the nightingale be dumb ;
While on her eggs his mate doth sit,
And all the chestnut lamps are lit.

Come, ere the baby leaves grow old.
Crumpled and soft, these keep the fold
Of tight enswathèd buds, O come !
While yet the swallow is new to home.

Come while our orchard like a bride
Blushes through white, and evening-tide
Hangs all the pear tree with such white,
Spun from the moon-rays for delight.

Come while the yellow moon still shows,
A moon of honey, a golden rose.
And while all night in rapt content
Our garden of Eden spills its scent.

Come, ere the cuckoo's song is over,
Come in the day of every lover,
When every lover still wings for home;
Come, ere the nightingale be dumb.

II

LOVE CONTENT

I WOULD not shorten if I might
By one sweet hour the hours that stand
Betwixt me and my heart's delight.

May and the lilac in the land,
All rapturous sounds, and scents at night,
The days spill out their golden sand.

Sweet is the garden, white with bloom,
Heavy with honey, drenched with scent,
Wherein a bride awaits her groom,

In a most measureless content.

With gold and white day fills the loom,
And soon the moon-gold nights are spent.

I would not shorten by an hour
The hours wherein I wait for you
With Love and all the world in flower.

So sweet, so sweet in sun and dew,
It is the hour of Love's full power,
Yet come, and make my world anew!

Home-Coming

O PASSIONATE pilgrim, was the way
So long then, was the day so long
From the blue matin till 'twas gray ?

From morning till the evening-song ?

Was it so long, love, while you came
Nearer each minute ? lead-foot, slow,
Did the day round to evening-flame ?
And was the daylight slow to go ?

And did your eager eyes look far
To see the crescent moon rise bright ?
And Hesper, your home-coming star,
Did Hesper tarry long that night ?

At last the moon rained gold, and lest
The moon-gold were too cold, there fell
Drifting of bloom about your nest ;
That night the nightingale sang well.

O sweet day full of scent and song,
Sweetly it wore from dawn to even ;
And yet the sweet day did us wrong,
Since evening brought the lover's heaven.

The Lark in Love

THE lark that's climbing stair on stair
His ladder of light that swings in air,
Hath a new note for every rung,
The lark's in love and young.

But soon the clouds allure no more,
No more the silver-damasked floor;
In spirals was his outward track,
But headlong comes he back.

He falls, shot through the burning heart,
Yea, through the heart by Love's own dart;
Too well the cunning archer knew
The arrow he sent was true.

But, lark, what wisdom dost thou prove
Whose wings, still tethered by thy love,
Carry thy song to Paradise,
Yet sweeter are her eyes.

That was her praise, thy song that poured,
And his of wedded lovers, the lord.
Io Hymen! Thou happy boy,
Drunken with love and joy.

Io Hymen! O, speckled breast,
Minstrel of thine own wedding feast,
Lover and bridegroom, singing still,
How Love shall have his will !

Love's Carefulness

UNTO myself I am grown dear,
 Being dear to you,
And fearful with a double fear
 In all I do,
Lest that some evil chance should prove
Ruin of that poor thing you love.

O this woman will love her girl
 And that her boy !
I keep not even the golden curl
 Of our dead joy ;
Now both my loves in one are given
Ever to you who make my heaven.

If all our palaces were dust
 Blown on the wind,
I might some other woman trust
 To be as kind,
To love as well as I—but then
What love could bid you love again ?

O generous giver, who hast given
Once and for aye,
For life and death, for earth and heaven,
As for to-day,
I love myself because you hold
Every hair of my head as gold.

Love's Summer

I

CALLING THE BIRDS

WHO close beside our window pane,
Whistles thrice at the dawn of day,
And listens for his answer fain?
Toujours gai.

Who bids the merry din resound,
While oaten pipes are silvery gray,
Ere chanticler first turns him round?
Toujours gai.

Who bids the corncrake, shrill and blithe,
Wake up on his sweet couch of hay,
And whirr against the mower's scythe?
Toujours gai.

Who hales the finch from dreams of love,
And linnet to his roundelay,
And from Love's arms the wooing dove?
Toujours gai.

Who calls the robin and the starling,
And bids the blackbird's flute to play,
The thrush to sing : O darling, darling?
Toujours gai.

Who is it wakes the sparrows' wall,
And sets a-tremble every spray,
With flutter, and chatter, and trill, and call?
Toujours gai.

This whistling thing at sweet o' the year,
O is he bird, or boy, or fay?
Mayhap, some fairy chanticleer.
Toujours gai.

May he be fed on honey and kisses,
And where the undying roses stay,
Wake the sweet world to newer blisses.
Toujours gai.

II

SUMMER-SWEET

HONEY-SWEET, sweet as honey smell the
lilies,

Little lilies of the gold in a ring ;
Little censers of pale gold are the lilies,
That the wind, sweet and sunny, sets a-swing.

Smell the rose, sweet of sweets, all a-blowing !
Hear the cuckoo call in dreams, low and sweet !
Like a very John-a-Dreams coming, going.
There's honey in the grass at our feet.

There's honey in the leaf and the blossom,
And honey in the night and the day.
And honey-sweet the heart in Love's bosom,
And honey-sweet the words Love will say.

III

SOUNDS

BEES in the white and scarlet cell
Of bean-flowers and in beds of thyme ;
The leader of the sheep his bell
Ringeth my even-song and prime ;
He leads his flock at morning early
Out to the dark grass sown with gold,
And when the evening dewes are pearly,
Back to the fold.

Somewhere they mow the grass: the sound
Brings with it fresh and fragrant breaths.
And little airs all scent be-drowned,
Blown from the white and purple heaths.
The last bird sings his waning passion.
And you, whose love can never fail,
Take up the burden and narration
Of the sweet tale.

IV

AUGUST WEATHER

DEAD heat and windless air,
And silence over all;
Never a leaf astir,
But the ripe apples fall;
Plums are purple-red,
Pears amber and brown;
Thud! in the garden-bed
Ripe apples fall down.

Air like a cider-press
With the bruised apples' scent;
Low whistles express
Some sleepy bird's content;
Still world and windless sky,
A mist of heat o'er all;
Peace like a lullaby,
And the ripe apples fall.

Love's Praises

LET other ladies name their loves
With flushing cheek and bashful eye,
And voices as the gentle dove's,
Crooning her love-song like a sigh;
I know not such sweet ways, in faith,
And yet I love my Love till death.

When I would tell how he excels
All other men my eyes grow dim,
My heart shakes and my bosom swells,
And only tears I have for him.
To my own heart with tears I say
His name, and silent turn away.

Let other ladies sit and sun
Like turtle-doves their shining heads,
And tell their lovers every one,
Their kindness and their gentle deeds.
How this is brave and that is true.
Only my tears are praise for you.

O secrets we may not impart,
Being too tender to be told;
And sweetnesses that break the heart,
Too great for one poor heart to hold.
Silence and tears beseem them best,
And hidden eyes in my Love's breast.

Love's House

O in Love's emerald house
Of emerald chestnut boughs,
The brown wife broods upon blue eggs and dear,
Nor finds the gold days long
Hearing her true Love's song
Of love and wedding in the sweet o' the year.

And in Love's golden house
Of golden chestnut boughs,
The brown bird to his sweet sings wild and clear;
Though little ones are gone,
The true Love lingers on,
For two old lovers in the fall o' the year.

Annus Mirabilis

(1893)

THE year that brought our hearts' desire,
The Spring came with a sudden glow ;
No tender Spring that shyly comes
With primroses and apple-blooms,
But garbed as with a golden fire
Of her own daffodills a-blow.

O year beyond all years that were !
The Summer followed fast in May ;
Scarce had the nightingales begun
When the red rose out-burned the sun,
And scent of ripe fruit in the air
Mixed with the honey-breath of hay.

That year the Spring came over again,
There were two Summers in that year.
In August there were bird-nestings
And second broods and such sweet things,
And on the world a golden rain,
And a new blossom on the pear.

That year the year was always May.
Our year in whose sweet close shall come
No winter with a waning sky,
Nor sad leaves fall, nor roses die;
But roses, roses all the way,
And never a nightingale be dumb.

Love at Easter

SING *to the Lord a new song!*
Because the Spring comes newly,
And every slender sapling
Has budded green and red.
Sing to the Lord a new song!
The skylark sings it truly,
Since all in dewy April
His love and he are wed.

Sing to the Lord a new song!
For every bird's a lover,
And o'er the purple furrows
The green spears nod and wave.
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Since Lenten fasts are over,
And Easter's gone in glory,
And Christ has left the grave.

Sing to the Lord a new song!
A song of love and wedding,
For every bird is building
His nest in bower and tree.
Sing to the Lord a new song!
The tufts of soft wool spreading
Where a brown wife and babies
This April-tide shall be.

Of the True Marriage

UNTO His servant on a day
The Lord revealed His hidden way.

He said: "Within this city great,
Where sin still slays the Lamb of God,
What dost thou think I contemplate
For comfort when I look abroad?"
His servant answered: "Yonder church
Crowded at Mass-time to the porch."

The Lord replied: "Not so"; and then,
His servant guessed to make Him glad
The priest where he sat shriving men;
The wounded healed; the orphan clad;
The widow's tears wiped off; the poor
Fed from another's little store.

And then he guessed the saint who died
Last night; Fra Leo, vigil-pale,
Painting the wings of Heaven; Christ's bride
New-wed, beneath her shadowy veil;
The grey cross in the market-place
With children playing at its base.

And many things of earth and heaven :
The Convent garden and the doves ;
The Western sky aflame at even ;
The mountains and the orange groves ;
The sea that moaned alway and prayed :
And yet the Lord God shook His head.

He said: "Lo, in thy city I see
A wife and husband, full of love,
Whose lives in loving harmony
Are set all death and change above.
I see: and leaning from my place,
I bless them in their hidden grace.

Whose love and peace and sweet accord
Comfort Me greatly": said the Lord.

TO GODFREY

LOVE-LIES-BLEEDING



*His small hands brought a flower for me,
A flower of love and sorrow.
Now angels over the gray sea
Bid my sweetheart good-morrow.*

*His face was sweeter than a rose,—
But O Love's rose is thorny!
He nestled in my breast so close
Before he went his journey.*

*O days when he and I lay there,
O he and I together,—
All in a trance of peace and prayer
In the rich August weather.*

*I gather from the self-same root
My flower of Love lies bleeding.
Ah, Love, one wound from head to foot,
Past help and interceding!*

Love Comfortless

THE child is in the night and rain
On whom no tenderest wind might blow,
And out alone in a hurricane.

*Ah, no,
The child is safe in Paradise!*

The snow is on his gentle head,
His little feet are in the snow,
O, very cold is his small bed!

*Ah, no,
Lift up your heart, lift up your eyes!*

Over the fields and out of sight,
Beside the lonely river's flow,
Lieth the child this bitter night.

*Ah, no,
The child sleeps under Mary's eyes!*

What wandering lamb cries sore distressed,
Whilst I with fire and comfort go?
O, let me warm him in my breast!

*Ah, no,
'Tis warm in God's lit nurseries!*

The Sheepfold

THE Shepherd of the sheepfold leant
Upon his crook, and saw within
The fold his milky ewes content,
His white lambs innocent of sin.

The milky mothers giving suck
He saw, and merry lambs at play,
Yet, leaning on his shepherd's crook,
His eyes, his heart, were turned away.

His tender thoughts were turned apart
To where his orphaned lambs cried on;
Their cries lay heavy on his heart—
Poor milkless lambkins and undone.

With tears he saw the milky dams
Go dropping milk upon the grass;
These were the mothers of dead lambs,
The mothers of dead lambs, alas!

O little lambs that would not live,
Your milk runs all to bitter waste,
Your milk that makes the Shepherd grieve,
Runs out like tears so hot and fast.

O comfort, comfort then those sheep,
Whose little lovely lambs are dead.
The milk that makes the Shepherd weep
Runs out like tears, and none is fed.

Holy Innocents

GOLD on gold, snow on snow,
Height on height, row on row ;
Greater in number these
Than the sands of the seas.

Yea, past all counting far,
Flower on flower, star on star,
Dimpled shoulder, cheek of peach,
As they lean each to each.

Golden heads, brows of pearl,
O many a boy and girl,
O many a girl and boy,
Mother's grief, mother's joy.

But amid snow and gold,
Gathered warm from the cold,
Fairer than gold or snow,
Should be two that I know.

Love's Thanksgiving

O how good God is that He sends
Stores of unfailing love to me,
And work and prayer and praise of friends,
Blackbirds and thrushes in the tree,
And sheep bells in the fields, and roses
And all the sweets of May and June,
And lavender and dew and posies,
And sun and moon.

O how good God is that He sends
Bean-rows in blossom, bees i' the hive,
Gray dawn and golden evening-ends,
And a glad heart to be alive;
A grateful mind and quiet fancies,
Shade from the sun, and sleep at night,
And clumps of brown and golden pansies,
And lilies white.

O how good God is that He sends
A little child to be all ours,
Mine and my dearest Love's, and tends
Our blossom in the sun and showers,

And bids His angels still keep near him
Lest that the little feet should miss,
And wings of angels still to bear him
Ever in bliss.

*

*

*

*

O how good God is that He keeps
The child for ever and ever well,
Above the tempests and the deeps,
In joy no tongue can tell.
Our little lamb of God goes straying,
By daisied meadows, 'neath dappled skies;
Our little lamb of God goes playing
Under God's eyes.

Love's Winter

O IF the shortest day were past,
Or if it were the shortest day,
'Twere easier to take heart at last
To face the outward way.

O if above a darling head
The snowdrops danced in the wind's play,
Then joy might steal in sorrow's tread
To meet the hope of May.

But now the shortest day is gone,
The year of sorrow gone for aye.
Ho, traveller, turn and face the sun,
For night gives place to day.

Ho, traveller, take the outward track,
Lift up your heart, give thanks, and pray.
God knows some New Year brings you back
What Old Year took away.

Love's Rose

MY rose shall have no care at all,
While the years rise and the years fall,
Shall keep its gold heart folded close
In the warm petals of my rose.

Winds that deflower may rave at will
Round the June rose to work her ill—
Scatter her leaves of pearl and peach,
O, but my rose is out of reach.

In the shut bud the canker-worm
Steals to defile her and deform.
Near my one rose no ill shall creep,
Seeing his plot kind angels keep.

The wind that swings him low and high
Softer is than a lullaby:
The wind that swings him high and low
Goes as his cradle used to go.

Winter shall never find my Sweet,
Nor shall he faint in summer heat,
Filled full of dews and bathed in sun,
Happy he is, my tender one.

God is his gardener, so 'tis plain,
God's rose shall never fret again,
Never be sad, never be gray,
Blooming a bud for ever and aye.

Yea, my sweet rose God's eyes shall please ;
O, what a happy lot is his !
Blessed the will that doth accord
Me to grow roses for my Lord.

Garden Secrets

A GARDEN in the Summer,
Wherein the birds and I
Built nests for some new-comer
To swing against the sky.

Garden of rose and lily,
And dream of dew and scent,
Where never a wind was chilly,
And hearts were well content.

The day smoked like a censer
Till evening brought the shade,
And leaves grew thicker, denser,
And we were not afraid.

Ah, birds, so blithe and cheerful,
We guessed not how should come
The Autumn gray and tearful,
The Winter cold and dumb.

Ah, building days and brooding!
We guessed not how 'twould be
With sad rains flooding, flooding,
Our ruined nests in tree.

The Child in Heaven

THE nursery windows were cold and black,
The nursery hearth it was gray and sad;
She moaned for the child that would never come
back,

Her heart was broken for her little lad.
She had folded his garments and put them away,
She had hidden his cradle quite out of sight:
But the child was glad in the light of day,
While she was caught in the bitter night.

*He thinks of his mother through all that cheer;
He would never forget in a hundred year.*

The silence ached for the baby's cry.

O silence, silence and loneliness!
And the thought of the empty nursery
Cried at her heart with a keen distress—
Knocked at her heart like a ghost of the night,
Followed her ever or near or far:
But her little boy he is clad in white,
In the land that is over the morning star.

*He thinks of his mother through all that cheer;
He would never forget in a hundred year.*

His bed was soft as a nest of roses,
His robes were all of the linen spun,
He had taken nought but a handful of posies
When he went out on his way alone—
When he went out where she might not follow,
And left her stricken and cold and bare,
His radiant journey by hill and hollow,
To the dear God's House in the glittering air.

*He thinks of his mother through all that cheer;
He would never forget in a hundred year.*

She will come one day to God's nursery,
Where His little babies are safe and warm,
And lift the little one to her knee,
And lose the ache of the empty arm,
And lose the ache of the empty heart,
And fashion newly Love's empty nest,
And kiss his brows and his lips apart,
And give him milk from her lonely breast.

*He thinks of his mother through all that cheer;
He would never forget in a hundred year.*

Love in Heaven

THE child is rocked on Mary's knees,
Her lullaby stills his alarms,
Love's cradle gives him happy ease,
Love's nest of love within her arms:
"Lullaby," she singeth, "Pretty babe of sorrow,
Thy mother comes to stay with thee to-morrow."

One angel hold his basin, one
His ewer of golden water sweet,
And one his robe to put him on
And one his pillow and his sheet.
"O mystery," they cry, "of love and sorrow,
Sleep sweet, dear babe, thy mother comes to-morrow."

Immortal angels standing by,
Kiss that sweet babe on Mary's knee.
"Blessed the woman is," they sigh,
"Whose motherhood hath given her thee.
Happy her lot in mortal joy and sorrow
Who lost thee yesterday but finds to-morrow."

NOTE

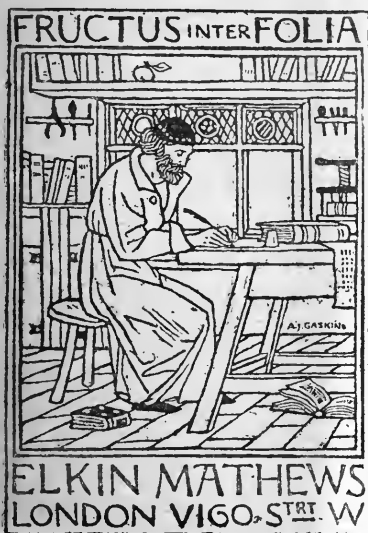
Note 1. Page 47.—The refrain of these verses, "The Child in Heaven," belongs to a poem by the late W. B. Rands,—*"Matthew Browne."* At the time I used it I was not aware of this; but the poem had been built up about it, and afterwards anything else seemed less right.

NEARLY all the verses in this volume have appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Of the exceptions, three were published in the *Illustrated London News*, one in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, one in the *Sunday Magazine*, one in the *New Review*, one in *Black and White*, and two in the *Irish Monthly*. To the various editors my acknowledgments and thanks.

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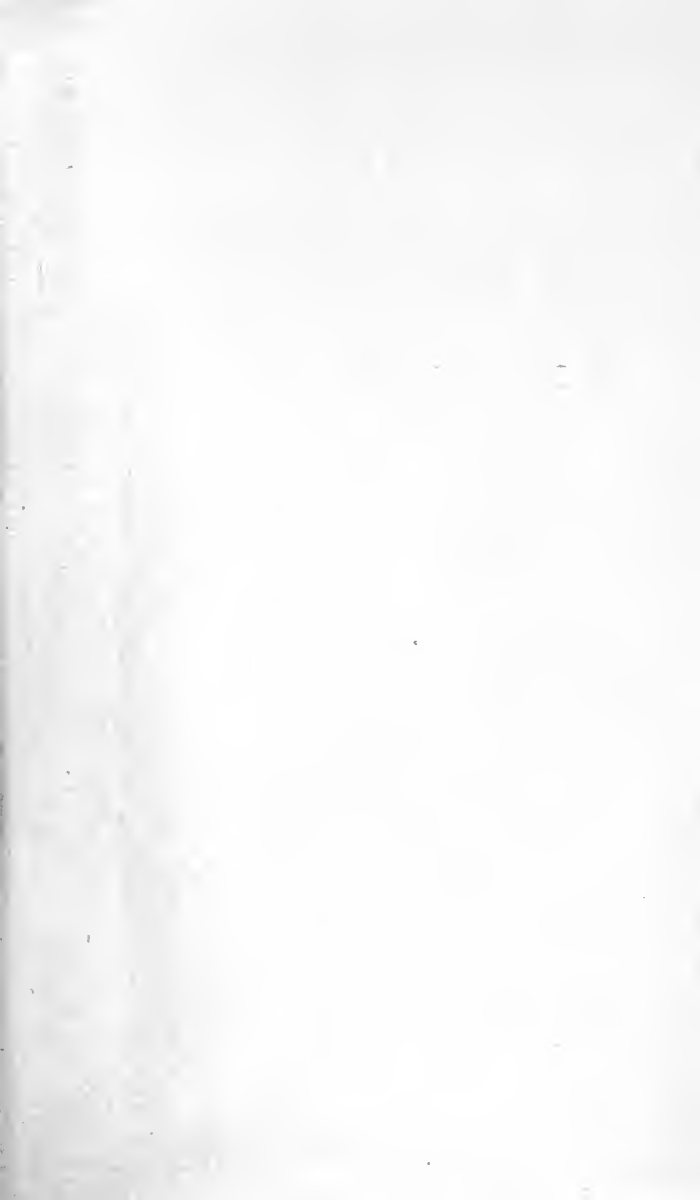
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